

News Release



Controller of the State of California - Kathleen Connell

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATE CONTROLLER CONNELL HOSTS SUMMIT ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

Morale, Recruiting, and Training Problems May Lead To Statewide Crisis

LOS ANGELES, December 12, 2000 – State Controller Kathleen Connell brought together panels of law enforcement experts to study a building crisis in California law enforcement. In addition to fighting crime, urban policing agencies especially are also battling problems within their own ranks. Recent police scandals have their roots in far deeper and more complex problems such as low morale, poor training, and inability to recruit qualified professionals, panel members explained.

“This is a recipe for disaster,” noted State Controller Connell. “You can’t have livable communities unless you have law enforcement as your first priority. This is essential for our quality of life. These problems highlight the need for better training and effective oversight of police.”

The panels included policing experts including Los Angeles County Sheriff Leroy Baca, San Diego Police Chief David Bejarano, and California Highway Patrol Deputy Designee, Alex Jones. Reformers included Director of the San Francisco Office of Citizen Complaints Mary Dunlap and U.S.C. Professor of Public Interest Law and Legal Ethics Edwin Chemerinsky. Researchers included C.S.U. San Bernardino Criminology Professor, Larry Gaines, South L.A. Peace Officers Research Association of California President, John Selens, and Jon Hamm, Chief Executive Director of the California Association of Highway Patrolmen.

As a member of the State Board of Control, Connell is involved with the state’s Victims of Crime program. Statistics show that last year one out of every 50 Californians was a crime victim. “Besides the emotional and physical harm these people suffered, the financial costs can also be devastating,” said State Controller Connell. The seminar was held on the U.C.L.A. campus to coincide with the release of the Controller’s quarterly economic forecast.

With California’s current low unemployment rate and high cost of living, it has become difficult for many policing agencies in our largest urban areas to recruit qualified officers. “There is a very strong problem recruiting people to work in urban areas where the price of housing is beyond a police officer’s affordability,” said Jon Hamm, Chief Executive Director of the California Association of Highway Patrolmen.

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Mary Dunlap, Director, San Francisco City and County Office of Citizen Complaints pointed out, “A society can be judged by how well police officers and citizens treat each other.”

Noting the recent Rampart police scandal in Los Angeles, U.S.C. Professor Edwin Chemerinsky, who conducted one of the Rampart investigations, commented, “There needs to be a clear assessment of the nature of the problem. How many officers were involved in Rampart? How many knew of it? How many in other divisions knew? We don’t know the answer to any of these questions yet.”

Such scandals tend to cast all law enforcement personnel into a negative light, most of the panel members acknowledged. As California Highway Patrol Deputy Commissioner Designee, Alex Jones, put it, “Perception is reality.”

The entire seminar was video taped by Adelphia Cable and will be aired for its subscribers later this week at a time and date to be announced.

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